

# Community



While her daughter Madeline colors a book, Mrs. Matthew J. Clarke (seated at left) shows the Open Letter to a neighbor. Mrs. Clarke joined the Open Letter group after its formation and helped obtain signatures by contacting her neighbors and friends.

## "No Race Problem Here" *Housing*

**Meeting to Solve South's Race Problem, Complacent Northerners Find Local One; Enlist 1,400 Signers to Open Letter Stating Desire for Unsegregated Community**

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois

**N**EARLY TEN OTHER CITIES have recently expressed interest in an Open Letter, signed by more than 1,400 citizens in this twin-city community, to "affirm our faith in an unsegregated community."

The foresighted citizens who sparked the person-to-person campaign for signatures—to use with the Open Letter in full-page newspaper advertisements—pass over this as just another of their efforts in favor of Christian and democratic principles.

But the technique of the move, and the effect it had, are attracting interest from residents in other cities as a partial solution to their own segregation problems. The private citizens who originated and carried through the idea of the Open Letter have received requests for information on their novel approach in favor of integration from such cities as Denver; Seattle; Pittsburgh; Wichita, Kansas; Evanston and Quincy, Illinois.

What is the story behind the open letter? How did it originate? What were the results?

Champaign and Urbana are situated on the rolling prairies of central Illinois, almost equally distant from Chicago and St. Louis. The twin cities, which are joined to each other by the campus and buildings of the University of Illinois, have a total population of about 70,000 souls.

Although the University is the largest source of employment in both Champaign and Urbana, other sources of income are farming, industries, and the Chanute Air Force technical school, some 14 miles north.

### Thought There Was No Problem

Negro population of the twin cities is small, only about 10 per cent, but the number is constantly increasing.

As is the case in most Northern cities the majority of the citizens, before the open letter, felt that they had no "race problem," "Negro problem," or whatever they pre-

(Continued on Page 4)



# Desegregating the Schools

**TWO THINGS STAND OUT** in the headlined accounts of racial disturbances over school integration. One is that only a handful of white people have been influenced by the violent preachments of such race-baiters as John Kasper. The other is the quiet courage of Negro children who brave the possibility of such violence; courage that surely must shame every member of every hostile crowd of white people at whatever school they gather.

True courage, as General William Tecumseh Sherman defined it, is "a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger, and a mental willingness to endure it."

## Singly, or a Handful

For anyone who has ever faced a mob or a potential mob, no definition fits better the courage shown by those lonely Negro children—sometimes singly, never more than a handful—who walk resolutely toward the school doors of trouble-spot communities where jeering crowds hurl insults and sometimes sticks and stones, where the possibility of greater violence is ever present.

So far there has not been much of

this, even in the few trouble-spots.

(Trouble, as usual, obscures the fact that in the vast majority of some 700 desegregated or desegregating school districts, involving more than 300,000 Negro pupils and seven million white pupils, there is no trouble.)

## Fair Play and Justice

For this all citizens who believe in fair play and justice can be thankful that most Southerners are outraged by the suggestion that violence take the place of legal procedure. . . .

This does not minimize the courage of the Negro students now attending school in troubled areas. It should commend them even to those who have no welcome for them, for courage, as Sir Winston Churchill observed, "is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others."

It has already guaranteed for these young Negroes a quiet dignity of conduct and demeanor that shames their detractors, and when the history of our troubled times is written it will have the shining place of honor it deserves.

—COURIER-JOURNAL  
Louisville, Kentucky



## "IT'S AN ARMY WITH FIXED BAYONETS"

**A** MONTH AGO Congress passed the Civil Rights bill. With the President's signature, it became the law of the land.

One part of the final bill—the jury trial provision—has aroused the curiosity of many people. They ask, "What is it?" and "What does it mean?" This article will answer the first question. A later article will deal with the second.

To understand the jury trial provision, it is necessary to understand what is meant by contempt of court.

When a judge orders that a person do something or that a person refrain from doing something, it is expected that the order will be obeyed. From time to time, however, a person will disobey the court's order. He is then considered as having contempt for the court's order, of being "in contempt of court."

## Two Things Court Can Do

Now, if persons could disobey orders without fear of being forced to obey and without fear of punishment, the orders of a judge would be worthless, and court proceedings would be futile and a waste of time. Hence, traditionally judges have had the power to force concerned persons to obey their orders and to punish individuals who disobeyed.

When a judge decides that a person

has disobeyed his order, that is, when he "holds him in contempt of court," he can do one of two things.

The court can place the person in jail until he decides to obey the court's order. The person will remain until he decides to obey the order; this may be for an hour or forever. As lawyers put it, the person "has the keys to the jail in his pocket," and he can be released by simply deciding to obey the court. The purpose of this procedure is to induce the person to obey the order. It is called **civil contempt**.

Or the court can fine the person or give him a jail sentence. In this case, even if the person decides to obey the

court's order, he must pay the fine or serve the sentence. The purpose of this procedure is to **punish the person for disobeying the order**. It is called **criminal contempt**.

As a rule, the court utilizes the procedure called **civil contempt** when its object is to secure compliance with its order. When it is too late for anything to be accomplished by the person's promising to obey the order, or when the disobedience is aggravated, the court will utilize the **criminal contempt** procedure.

Now, traditionally courts in this country have, without the aid of a jury, decided (1) whether the person charged with contempt of court has actually disobeyed an order which applied to him; (2) if so, whether to hold the person in civil or criminal contempt; and (3) if held in criminal contempt, how much the fine should be or how long the jail sentence.

(With two exceptions, federal courts always have decided these three questions without a jury. The Clayton Anti-Trust Act provided that in criminal contempt proceedings a jury should determine whether a court order was disobeyed. The Norris-LaGuardia Labor Relations Act did likewise; this restric-

tion on the court was removed in the Taft-Hartley act.)

The new Civil Rights law leaves all these traditional powers intact—with this one exception:

If—in a voting rights case—the court finds a person guilty of **criminal contempt** and fines him over \$300 or sentences him to more than 45 days in jail, the person will have the right to demand a new trial in which the question of whether he disobeyed an order applicable to him will be determined by a jury.

In all other circumstances of voting rights cases—if the court finds the person guilty of **civil contempt** or if the court finds him guilty of criminal contempt and fines him not more than \$300 or sentences him to not more than 45 days in jail—he is not, by right, entitled to a new trial with a jury.

This, then, is what the jury trial provision is. In the next issue of **COMMUNITY** we shall discuss what it means.

—John J. Ryan

Mr. Ryan is a member of the Chicago Bar. He was president of the Catholic Interracial Council of Loyola University, Chicago, in 1950.

## Two Different Worlds

"As the sun disappeared, the air was filled with disheartening remarks"

"It makes me feel good," reader Theresa Spohn wrote **COMMUNITY** from Mount Morris, Michigan, "to know someone shares my opinion."

"I believe in equality of opportunity so strongly I just wanted to express my opinion, so I have written an article for your paper. True, I am no literary artist."

**L**AST SUMMER on a sultry evening everybody in our neighborhood was sitting outdoors discussing yards and work.

The sun was still shining when a car came up the street with a Negro family in it.

As the sun disappeared, the air was filled with disheartening remarks. All were sure the neighbors were selling out to a Negro family!

The men decided to investigate. Four headed for the front door and two for the back, but when they approached the house, "they chickened out," as one man put it.

## Decide to Investigate

The matter was not ended, however. One man said he would see the real estate dealer first thing in the morning. He didn't mind missing a day of work over a big issue like this.

The next morning bright and early, up to the office he went. The real estate dealer was just as angry as the neighbors the night before.

His car went up the street in a cloud of dust.

He had a surprise in store, for when he talked to the homeowner, he found out the owner and the Negro family were just friends. The Negro family had visited often, but it was usually dark when they came. He also explained that he and the Negro man had had a business together at one time.

## No Loss in Value

A neighbor lady came to see me and went on about, "Don't you know the valuation of the land would go down?" I told her I didn't believe this to be true because it has been proven otherwise.

She asked me, "What would you do if they moved in?" I told her I would invite them down for a cup of coffee.

She shook her head and said, "I believe you would, too."

You could feel the tension leave the neighborhood now that the threat of "invasion" had disappeared.

Yet I could only feel pity for them. They were like small boys throwing stones and making verbal threats.

They will tell you they acted like

any normal, rational people. If this is being rational, I must have the wrong concept of the word.

## Looking at the Positive

This little affair had a bright side, if you care to look. (Maybe my sense of logic has reached a new low.)

Number one: There are a white and a Negro family who are close friends, which makes me very happy.

Number two: The two families made perfect fools of the whole neighborhood for their stupidity. (Perhaps my sense of humor has reached a new low, too.)

People seem to forget that Negro people have contributed greatly to America as American citizens, in the entertainment fields, as writers, doctors, lawyers, athletes, and priests. They have served this country in war. We have worked, played, and laughed together. Why not live together as good neighbors?

I pray every night that people will realize we don't live in two different worlds. We are all made to the image and likeness of God.

—Theresa B. Spohn

## COMMUNITY

1

Mary Dolan, EDITOR

Delores Price,  
CIRCULATION MANAGER

October, 1957 \* Vol. 17, No. 2

Address all communications to:

4233 South Indiana Avenue  
Chicago 15, Illinois

Address change: allow one month. Please send both old and new address.

Subscription rate: \$1 a year (foreign \$1.25 a year). Single copy, 10 cents. 10-99 copies, 7 cents per copy. 100 or more copies, 5 cents per copy.

Advertising rates on request.

## COMMUNITY

(Formerly "The Catholic Interracialist")

Is published by Friendship House, an organization of Catholic laymen and women, dedicated to working for love of God on the elimination of racial prejudice and discrimination.

## COMMUNITY

Is published monthly except August.

Office of publication: 115 North Mason Street, Appleton, Wisconsin. Second class mail privileges authorized at Appleton, Wisconsin. Forms 3579 should be forwarded to 4233 South Indiana Avenue, Chicago 15, Illinois.

COMMUNITY



# Easy Friendliness Lacking in This Neighborhood

*Parochial Life*

NEGROES AS WELL AS WHITES have a lot to learn before there can be any free and easy living in the changing neighborhood that is part of St. Thomas Aquinas parish in Cleveland.

The majority of both races, trying to understand each other, have reached the point where they are convinced that the old prejudices are wrong.

But several Negroes complain that when white folks try to be friendly, they give the impression of "feeling noble about it." The Negro in turn thinks he's being patronized and resents it.

Whites, on the other hand, complain that the Negroes are prone to suspicion and tend to see racial prejudice where none exists or is intended.

## Opposite Ends of Bridge

A young Negro mother of two, Mrs. Leonard Richardson summed up the feelings of both:

"We are at opposite ends of a bridge. We both want to start across it and meet. We know we should; we know some day we must—but we don't quite know how to do it."

Misunderstandings and just plain not knowing each other make crossing the bridge harder. An usher in St. Thomas Church related this incident:

The Ladies Guild was receiving corporate Communion, and ushers were posted up front to hold back others until the members reached the rail.

A Negro woman, unaware of what was going on, headed up the aisle. The usher stopped her, as he would stop anyone else. But she objected. She thought she had been stopped because she was Negro and that the whites were receiving first.

## Apologizes for Error

After Mass, when she realized the reason, she found the usher and apologized.

Another young Negro woman caused some consternation in church a few months back. Just as Mass was starting she entered carrying a large Bible. She walked to a front pew, nodding and smiling at persons she knew on the way up the aisle.

What the congregation didn't know was that the woman was in a convert class and hadn't been baptized. In the Protestant sect to which she had belonged going to church was a social function. A person always nodded, waved or smiled at her neighbors.

In her own way she was telling her friends in St. Thomas that she was coming into the Church. If they had

known, there would have been rejoicing instead of distress.

Mrs. Richardson pointed out that the misunderstandings loom large because too many white folks still look upon Negroes as "docile darkies" begging for recognition and equality.

That description, if it fits Negroes anywhere, does not apply to those who have moved into St. Thomas Aquinas.

They have reached an economic level where they can afford decent housing

ple who have racial prejudice. Negroes have their share of it too.

## Hard to Forget Guilt

"But Negroes tend to get over it quicker. They are the ones who have been sinned against, and it's not too difficult to forgive.

"The white folks are the ones who have sinned and it's not as easy to forget the guilt. Instead, they often try to excuse it by claiming Negroes are

"That childhood training helps keep the races apart when they grow up. The white person hears of a Negro being drunk or in a fight or shot and he applies that condition to the whole race.

"As a result, the white person very often fears he is in physical danger because Negroes live nearby. The hard-working colored man, trying to rear and educate his children just as well as whites, resents it."

## Why Did They Move?

The Richardsons are typical of many Negroes who have moved into St. Thomas parish. He works at Thompson Products and earns what she calls a "good income, not real high, but enough."

They bought their home about two months ago. Like most of the others, they had lived in cramped quarters while saving money for an adequate house. Her reason for moving into the area also is typical. She said:

"We moved here more to live like whites than to live with them. Our reason is simple, we have an equal economic status and equal education—why shouldn't we have the same benefits?

## If Possible, Friendly

"We don't necessarily want, and are not working for, an all-Negro neighborhood. All we want is good neighbors. If possible, we want friendly neighbors. But we're not going to push ourselves on white folks. I'm not going to run over to a white neighbor with a pie just to show her I'm friendly. First we'll become friendly, then will come the pie."

But Mrs. Richardson thinks both Negroes and whites have made giant strides in overcoming prejudices in the past few decades. She pointed out that both now accept the fact that they can work together and go to school together without friction.

She said that now whites and Negroes eat in the same restaurants, that a white person sees nothing wrong in colored nurses taking care of him in a hospital. She added:

"There seems to be only one thing left—saying 'Hi, neighbor' and shaking hands over the back fence. That's the hardest of all."

—James T. Flannery

Reprinted by permission from the CATHOLIC UNIVERSE BULLETIN. This is the last of four articles about one changing neighborhood which appeared in the Cleveland, Ohio, paper.



Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Richardson and their sons Leonardo and James.

They are convinced that lack of opportunities made it more difficult for them to reach that level than it was for the whites.

And though they have been held down by racial prejudice for centuries, they are not cowed or frightened. Instead they are fiercely independent—perhaps too much so.

Mrs. Richardson sees that independence as growing out of resentment which the Negroes feel against whites after years of oppression. She said:

"Don't think it's only the white peo-

an inferior people. That further feeds the Negroes' resentment."

## Obstacles to Understanding

Mrs. Richardson sees that resentment and the whites' fear as the two obstacles that must be recognized and overcome before the races can understand each other.

She said both have been built into the personalities of many Negroes and whites since they first learned to understand what "Mommy said" or "Daddy said." She added:

## CHANGES BRING CHALLENGE

*Parochial Life*

WHEN THE Legion of Mary began working in a parish on Chicago's west side some years ago, demolition for a superhighway had begun on one side of the parish. Another transition was also beginning: Negroes and Puerto Ricans were slowly moving into the neighborhood. It was an old parish, so were the houses, and the people were poor and, for the most part, laborers.

Legion of Mary members were women from 20 to 60 years old. When they began their work of contacting people who were listed in a parish census as Catholic but not practicing, there were no Negroes or Puerto Ricans attending the church.

After they had visited in various parts of the parish, it became obvious to the ladies that the newcomers should be attending their parish church. The Legion members asked the pastor why the late arrivals weren't at Mass. Father said they were welcome, but he didn't know how to get them to church.

The Legion then made it a point to visit new people (when they heard of

a moving) and to invite them to come to church. A Puerto Rican woman was so taken with the welcome she became an active Legion of Mary member and made special efforts to bring the Spanish speaking people to Mass with her. Thus the first dent was made.

None of the Negroes visited were Catholic... but the Legion of Mary, not one to admit defeat, again called on the parish priests. Would they publicize convert classes and instruct the Negro people? The priests were not too hopeful, but told the ladies if they got a group together interested in instructions and willing to attend classes, they would surely teach.

## Begin to Attend Mass

It took about three months of hard work to seek out people (both Negro and white) but there was a class, and shortly after instructions started, a handful of brown-skinned people began attending Mass.

If you aren't struck yet by the leg-work and perseverance of a handful of

women, I'll tell you a bit about a later project they embraced.

## Note Self-Segregation

They noticed (for the first time in their lives, I'm sure) a pattern of self-segregation had developed among the children—brown kids played with brown kids—Spanish-speaking kids with Spanish-speaking kids. This "shook" the Legion of Mary. So did the people who weren't attending Sunday Mass because they had to take care of their wee ones.

To kill two birds with one stone, the Legion took on baby sitting during Mass. This soon mushroomed, and older children were coming to "Sunday school" for classes which would enable them to make their First Communion. Many Negro children also came (most of them non-Catholic).

The Sunday school project was well integrated, but Mass attendance was still largely "white." So the women thought up an after-Mass Sunday outing system for the summer. Many more parishioners were brought in on car-pools, pot-luck lunches, and all that's

involved in a mass-migration to the great outdoors on a hot day. They visited many places, beaches, seminaries, shrines, and parks. The next fall saw more of the newcomers falling into the Sunday Mass pattern.

## No Interest in Race

If you are about to suggest that these six Legion of Mary workers were crusaders in race relations, don't. Race relations meant nothing to them. They were interested in the salvation of souls and the spread of the faith. Most of them—to judge by their comments on racial happenings elsewhere—were opposed to integration.

That they were so unmindful of any color line in their Legion work is an interesting comment on the separation we humans can make between what we say in theory we will accept and what in practice we may do.

—Delores Price

Circulation Manager of COMMUNITY, Delores describes here an experience of friends of hers.



# Old Residents and New, <sup>Shoring</sup> Negro and White, Halt Neig

**"The trick is to get integration, and not simply a displacement of one race by another"**

THERE ARE six Negro and 23 white families in residence now on Windermere Place, a street of large and comfortable homes in the heart of what once was the most fashionable section of St. Louis. The houses are handsome, three-storied, old-fashioned structures of brick or stone. They have small, well-kept yards in front and large gardens at rear. Impressive pillars and an iron gate mark the entrance, just off busy Union Boulevard.

Last New Year's Day, Charles Nagel, a tall and eminently civilized St. Louis patrician who is director of the City Art Museum, joined Mrs. Nagel in inviting everybody on the street to their house, 27 Windermere Place, for egg-nog. Nearly everybody came, including a number of Negro neighbors. The occasion went off handsomely. In subsequent days, two "For Sale" signs in front of white-owned homes came down.

## Whites Stay Put

It is only in the last three or four years that Negroes have lived on Windermere Place. The extraordinary thing about the situation on Windermere Place and its environs—an area criss-crossed by tree-lined streets of old homes and apartments in varying stages of repair—is not that Negroes have moved in but that the white residents, for the time being at least, are not following the old pattern and moving out en masse. Windermere Place is the focal point for an effort by well-intentioned white and Negro citizens to work out together the common problems of a truly integrated urban community.

## Seek Stability

Generalship for this effort is provided by the bi-racial West End Community Conference, an organization with a dull name and a bright purpose. It has about 800 members and represents a 150-block segment of the city with a population of approximately 25,000. Since 1950, the proportion of Negroes has jumped from one per cent to more than ten per cent. Under high-hearted leaders, the Conference is trying to foster conditions under which the races can live side by side without tension, in an atmosphere of stability and peace. The trick is to get integration, and not simply a displacement of one race by another. It involves not only the fostering of good relations between people, but the fiercest imaginable hand-to-hand, day-to-day combat against forces of physical decay.

Human nature being somewhat cynical, it took the Conference some time to convince newspapers, the general public, and the Negroes that the organization was not just another property-owners' combine, intent on turning the clock back.

## Elbow-Deep in Projects

Andy Brown, Jr., who recently moved to Windermere Place from another street close by, is the current chairman of the Conference board. Brown, an engineer for an electrical concern by day, spends his evenings elbow-deep in one Conference project or another. He is a staunch church-goer, young, cheerful, energetic and zealous. He combines liberal views with notable ability to call a spade a spade, an attitude that might be said to typify the Conference's guiding spirits.

When asked why he is willing to give so much time and effort, Brown says: "I am personally interested in seeing integration work in St. Louis, and I am interested in the neighborhood where I have always lived." On the evening the question was asked, he worked at

one Conference session until shortly after 11 o'clock, drank a cup of coffee and dashed off to attend another meeting a few doors down the street.

## How it Started

The organization he heads was spontaneous in its origins but modeled itself on the noted Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference in Chicago. It was formed in April 1955 by 200 persons who met at the Episcopal Church of the Ascension. Mrs. Robert Bassett, now president of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare, and Mrs. Park J. White, wife of a pediatrician deeply concerned with Negro health problems, served as temporary chairman until a board of directors could be elected. A rather conservative-minded business man, Thomas Kinsella, resident of the neighborhood most of his life, was the first board chairman.

## Action Taken

The Conference's zoning and real estate committees went immediately into



These St. Louis neighbors think that interracial neighborhoods CAN be stabilized—and improved. Here they are working to do just that at a regular meeting of the Board of West End Community Conference.

action, and action was overdue. Zoning standards in the area, part of which was like Windermere Place and part definitely slummy, had gone under in the war period. Much of the 150-block area had been downgraded to multiple-dwelling use. Rooming houses had become abundant, many of them illegal because it was expensive to make the fire-protection modifications required by law. Apartments had been carved up, and the parked automobiles of the transients choked the streets.

## Gulls at the Tide

"For Sale" signs marked the forward boundary of Negro advance, and the real estate men skittered about along the line, like gulls at the tide's flow. If there was indeed a "containment agreement" among propertied interests of the city, ordaining that Negroes might move to one place but not to another, as the Conference says, this was its execution. It was not a pretty thing to watch, nor was it calculated to improve race relations.

## Not Betting a Penny

In this situation the arm of the Government, the Federal Housing Administration, exerted no steadying influence but contributed to the chaos. It would not underwrite housing loans, thus failing to provide the support that normally steadies property values. The Government, in effect, favored integration but would not bet a penny on it. At every hand, in the area of the Conference's interest, there were indications of a slide into the abyss.

These problems obviously were broader than any question of Negro infiltration or Negro occupation. White people can do a beautiful job of creating slums without assistance from any quarter. The generally inferior economic status of Negro purchasers, however, was an aggravating factor in this situation. For example, an old house would sell for \$10,000. The buyer might pay \$750 down and saddle himself with three mortgages. To meet the monthly payments, perhaps \$200 to \$300, he would be forced to take in a multiplicity of roomers. Even so, he might lose the house, and the dreary cycle would be repeated.

## Attack Zoning Violations

"It became apparent we could not stabilize the neighborhood without doing something about the zoning violations," Brown says. The real estate committee, housewives working by day and their businessmen husbands assisting at night, took on the job of checking newspapers and legal reports for every sale or other transaction involving neighborhood real estate.

If advertisements were out of line, or "For Sale" signs were larger than the legal maximum, the committee

ward segregation was inevitable. We were misunderstood, and sometimes the idea was hard to put across. But until integration is further along, something must be done to maintain an equal percentage."

Many of the headaches the committee faced related to integration; others did not. Overcrowding and a wide disparity in preparation among pupils of the same grade had to be dealt with. So did a variety of petty incidents at the nuisance level, such as vandalism to teachers' automobiles when they attended night PTA meetings, disciplinary infractions in classrooms and hallways, and so on.

"It is a good feeling to be part of something you know is ethically and morally right—even if it fails, which it won't," says Mrs. George Arms, wife of the director of Educational Television Station KETC at Washington University, who heads the schools committee. "This is the closest I am ever going to come to being a missionary."

## Gains Noted

It was early in the summer of 1956 that the Conference's intensive labors began to produce tangible gains and things began to look up. In June the St. Louis Board of Aldermen approved a bill re-zoning a 32-block area from multiple dwelling to two-family status. This was done at the Conference's urging and was the most comprehensive

(Continued from Page 1)

ferred to call it, as they clucked their tongues over the headlines about riots, scrapes, and boycotts in the South.

Racial questions have not been new to all the citizens in the twin-city community. An Employment on Merit Committee had spent several years of devoted work in the area. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has a local chapter.

About three years ago, the one Catholic Hospital quietly changed its policy to one of complete integration. A local interracial group had quietly brought integration to the town's restaurants, public swimming pools, and movies.

Some members of the League of Women Voters had nearly 10 years of study and work on housing in the area in North Champaign and Urbana where most of the 7,000 Negroes are housed in over-crowded and substandard homes.

## Re-examine Local Practice

What happened, then, to cause more than 1,400 individuals to sign their names to advertisements in the two local papers? These signers told their fellow citizens that "the plight of Americans denied human and constitutional rights because of race has shocked us into re-examination of our own practices in Champaign-Urbana."

On the evening of February 29, 1956, less than a dozen persons, colored and white, met in a private home in Urbana to discuss the racial difficulties in the South.

They were concerned over the situation at the University of Alabama and the reverses suffered in Miss Lucy's case, over the arrest of Birmingham's colored ministers, and over the outcome of the Montgomery bus boycott. They talked about possible assistance to these Southern people.

Then some people in the gathering began to relate local problems. Soon the group was concluding that their community itself was a segregated community, and differed from the South in the more informal or subtle means used in segregating Negroes.

(Continued at right)



# Neighborhood Decay

A residential neighborhood is integrated—and renewed

upgrading of such property in the city's history. The upgrading meant that no additional rooming houses could be started in that section. The event was widely publicized.

Not only that, but in September, 1956, the city notified the West End Community Conference that the 150-block segment had been duly designated as the third in St. Louis to receive "conservation project" status. As such, the area will get a two-year facelifting that calls for expenditure of \$65,000 in bond-issue funds, and there will be a careful check by the city to see that zoning laws are followed.

## Can't Afford to Rest

This spring, the Conference rented space in a vacant store for an office, and has hired a girl to answer the telephone and help with the tremendous work load. Even so, neither Brown nor his associates feel they can afford complacency. They are dedicated to the proposition that white and Negro citizens can live in the same neighborhood, but they have found that it takes a bit of doing.

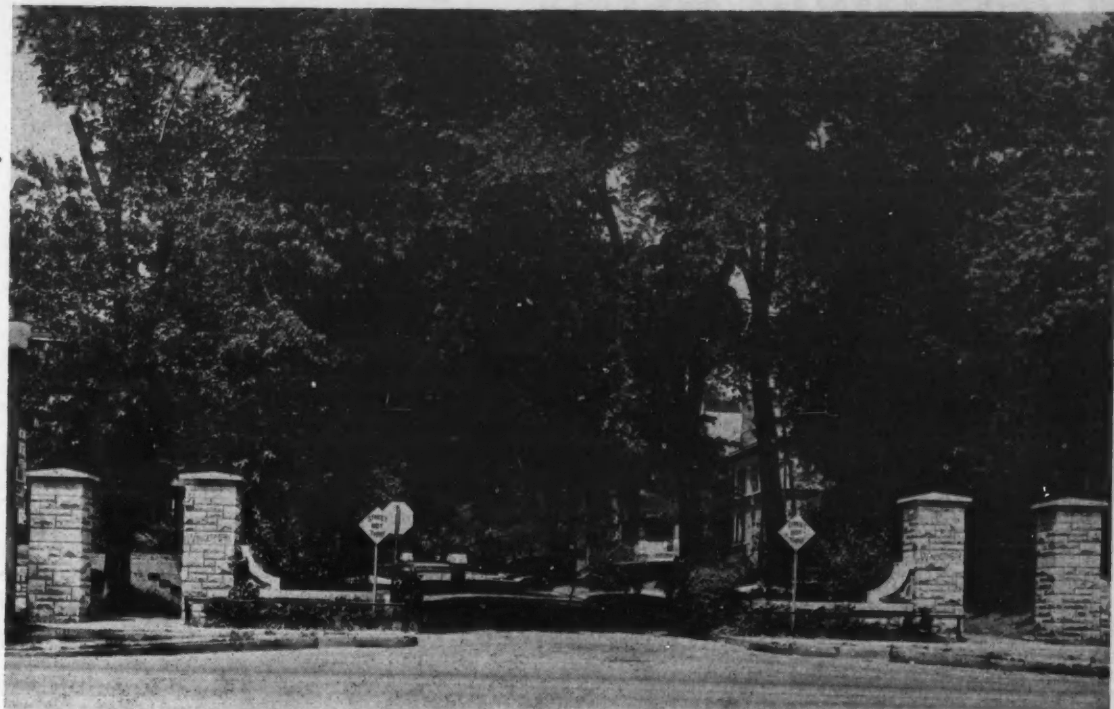
"You might call this whole thing a sort of holding action," remarks one of the group. The military analogy is not precise, but the speaker's meaning is clear enough. The intensity of the Conference's battle against powerful forces has brought encouraging results, but cannot be maintained indefinitely. One small sector can be outflanked, pinched off and overwhelmed.

Ultimately, the success or failure of the West End Community Conference integration effort will depend on what happens along a much wider front. If the St. Louis experience contains a lesson that is valid elsewhere, it is that

constituted authority—local, state and Federal—must give the front-line troops more help. This business of looking the other way, and hoping things work out, is not good enough.

—William K. Wyant, Jr.

Mr. Wyant, native of Greensboro, North Carolina, is on the staff of the St. Louis POST-DISPATCH. This article originally appeared in THE NEW LEADER for July 8, 1957, and is reprinted by permission.



(Murillo Studios)

Once on the decline, Windermere Place is again a street of comfortable family homes, with boarding houses barred.

## "NO RACE PROBLEM HERE"

(Continued from page 4)

The group decided to hold another discussion, and set a second meeting for the following week. Nearly 50 persons of many occupations attended the second meeting. The group did not select a name for itself, but decided upon a plan of action.

### Told Public Wouldn't Agree

As a woman who was a member of the open letter group explained:

"A few middle-class Negroes, professional people, who had tried to find better housing outside the 'designated' neighborhood said they met the same run-around answers from realtors, subdividers, and investors: 'We wouldn't mind selling or renting to Negroes, but the neighbors wouldn't stand for it.' Foreign students told of similar difficulties finding rooms.

"Those who had tried interviewing businessmen and employers about hiring Negroes were often told: 'We wouldn't mind hiring a Negro, but our customers are too prejudiced to allow it.'"

The group decided that a public announcement of their convictions on integration would show their community that there were "neighbors and customers" without such prejudices. And the open letter was born.

The principal goal was, a spokesman of the group said, "to try to show employers and citizens who might be persuaded to integrate that they would not stand alone in the community."

### Distribute Open Letters

Single copies of the open letter were printed. Initial distribution was made through churches, and then on a person-to-person basis. No pressure was exerted in any way, and no door-to-door campaign was undertaken.

The individual signatures allowed the person signing the statement to do so on his own, and not because of some other name or names on the list. If a husband signed, it was not taken for granted that his wife agreed or vice versa.

The persons were made aware that their signatures, along with those of other signers, would appear in full-page advertisements in the *Champaign-Urbana Courier* and the *News Gazette* on April 22, 1956.

Each signer was asked to contribute money to pay for the ads and some extra. The average contribution was 50 cents. Money received over the cost

of the ads and printing of the individual letters was turned over to the American Friends Service Committee "for distribution in direct relief in areas of racial tension."

Students from the University of Illinois and others who were not eligible to vote in Champaign County were asked not to sign the statement.

### Not Connected with a Group

The group decided not to operate under any name, and to disband after the letter was published. Thus, the open letter would not be connected with a special group, but would be the statement of the individuals who signed the letter.

They did, however, take a post office box so that other signatures and contributions could be received after the advertisements had appeared.

Not even a handful of the usual unsigned "crank" letters were received by the group. No letters to the editor appeared following the movement, and no negative reaction was expressed publicly. (A press conference held several days before the ad was to appear helped to get the support of the press.)

### Unaware and Complacent

Among the effects of the open letter was to bring to light the fact that a large part of the community seemed unaware that any difficulties were experienced by local Negroes. Some people obviously felt guilty, but others were troubled about the South and complacent about their Northern home town.

"Is there any segregation in this town?" was one comment. "You know that Negroes can swim in the city pool." And, "There is no need to force integration. It will come."

The open letter group replied to these comments by describing the hard work of the many interracial groups that had brought about the integration that was said to have "come."

One woman, who chose not to sign because her husband disagreed with her, reported to her neighbor who had

### "THE OPEN LETTER"

We believe that many among us will welcome an opportunity to make known to the entire community our individual commitment to democratic principles.

The plight of Americans denied human and constitutional rights because of race has shocked us into re-examining our own practices in Champaign-Urbana. In the face of the urgent need to make American community life demonstrate the principles we proclaim to the world, we the undersigned take this means to affirm our faith in an unsegregated community.

We believe that all employment should be on the basis of merit only. We would be happy to deal with persons who have been hired regardless of race in any business or institution: stores, restaurants, buses, services, schools, hospitals, trains, etc. We would be happy to work at our places of employment beside qualified persons regardless of race.

We believe that any family should be free to choose its place of residence. We would welcome neighbors on a personal basis without regard to race, creed, or country of origin.

We believe our community should be one that makes no distinction on the basis of race, creed, or country of origin, and, as individuals, we will endeavor to make our personal practices match our faith in these principles.

given her the open letter, "We talked about it all afternoon while driving to Indiana. I was thrilled to discover that my daughter is really unprejudiced. And you know, she is kind of convincing my husband—and we had never even talked about this before."

"I don't think it is possible to pinpoint the effects it has had," one open letter worker said. However, another spokesman for the group could cite improvements:

Election of a Negro to the Champaign school board, the beginnings of integration in the school system of both towns, new employment opportunities, a few openings in housing, and an improvement in public opinion.

(There are other improvements yet to be made in trade union employment and non-traditional jobs and, of course, in housing.)

### Other Efforts Helped

The open letter worker listed as helpful factors:

The national trend towards integration; the example of the policy of the University of Illinois; the work of groups such as the League of Women Voters, the Ministerial Association, the United Church Women, and the American Association of University Women.

Although the group disbanded after the printing of the advertisement, many of their ideals are being carried out by the Council for Community Integration. This group was founded a few months after the letter appeared, and was guided by some of the same people who had been in the open letter work.

In the words of the Council's own statement: "Our goal is to persuade our community to value individuals on a personal basis, and to make no distinctions because of race, creed, or country of origin. We shall act to bring harmonious integration into all aspects of our community life."

—Bernard Lyons

Bernie joins the staff of WORK as assistant editor October 9th. He was formerly assistant news editor of the PEORIA (Illinois) REGISTER.



# Integration Acres

*Housing*

DEDICATED SALESMEN

"Quotas," "controlled occupancy," or "housing ratios" (you may choose the term you prefer) has been the topic of much discussion in COMMUNITY these past months.

It all started with Ann Stull's article last April, taking a firm stand against quotas. "Not so!" said others. And so the controversy grew.

This latest contribution is in a somewhat lighter vein. You may not agree with the moral of "Mr. Pearldiver's" drama. Whether you do or not, you will agree, we are sure, that it is entertaining.

## "THE NUMBERS GAME AT INTEGRATION ACRES"

A Slow-Moving, But Provocative Play in One Act

by S. J. Pearldiver

**SCENE:** Integration Acres, a new suburban development of 100 houses. Although the sales office has just opened, the houses are so well-constructed, so attractively designed, and such a good buy for the money (in accordance with a current theory), there are 76 people waiting to make their down payments, including closing costs.

Since the Acres is inaccessible except by helicopter, and there will not be another flight in today, the sales staff feels relieved that it will not have to interview more than the 76. Of this number, incidentally, 46 are Negroes.

One after another, 75 people buy houses and trundle their Army cots and overnight bags off to their new abodes to await the arrival of their furniture and families in tomorrow's airlift. The last man to be interviewed by a Dedicated Salesman (in accordance with a current theory) is a Negro.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN** (consoling): Gosh, I'm terribly sorry.

**NUMBER 46:** Why?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Because you're a Negro.

**NUMBER 46:** Well, I know it has its disadvantages at times, but it's nothing to be sorry about.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Of course. Excuse my indiscretion. Sit down, won't you? I suppose you're here to buy one of our lovely houses.

**NUMBER 46:** That's the general idea. Although you didn't advertise the fact (in accordance with a current theory), I heard through the grapevine that you're selling to Negroes as well as whites. (Takes out check book.) How much is the down payment?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Not so fast, sir. We screen our applicants very

carefully. But more to the point: I'm afraid that we don't have any more houses for sale to the likes of you—er, I don't mean that in an offensive way, of course.

**NUMBER 46:** Don't give it another thought. I'm used to being offended in inoffensive ways. But I don't quite follow your statement that all the houses are sold. I counted 100 houses, and 76 people, including myself, waiting to buy them. A simple calculation would seem to indicate that there are at least 25 houses left. Right?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Right! I mean, right, but . . .

**NUMBER 46:** Right but what, man?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Well, it's this way. Those last 25 houses are for sale to whites only. But don't take that the wrong way.

**NUMBER 46:** I'm used to taking wrong things the right way. Please go on.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Our Committee decided to sell 45 per cent of these houses to Negroes and 55 per cent to whites.

**NUMBER 46:** Why?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN** (surprised at the question): Why? Why, to prevent the establishment of a ghetto, of course. Isn't that what we all want?

**NUMBER 46:** All I want at the moment is to buy a new house. Anything wrong with that?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Not at all, no, of course not. And we sympathize with you entirely. That's exactly why we set up this quota system: so that you and other Negroes can buy new houses wherever and whenever you please.

**NUMBER 46:** But not here and now.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Well, no. We'll put you on the waiting list, though, in case one of the Negroes who signed a contract today should pull out of the deal. Then there's al-



NUMBER 46

**"DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Our Committee decided to sell 45 per cent of these houses to Negroes and 55 per cent to whites. **NUMBER 46:** Why?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Why? Why, to prevent the establishment of a ghetto, of course. Isn't that what we all want?"

ways the possibility that the quota for Negroes may be increased (if the current theory changes).

**NUMBER 46:** If it went up to 46 per cent, I'd be satisfied.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN** (hopefully): It might. We started with 20 per cent, then went up to one-third, and ended up with 45 per cent, although some of the Committee members think we should have stayed at one-third. But you never know. It might go up to 50 per cent.

**NUMBER 46:** Is there anyone I could talk to about jacking it up to 46 per cent anyway?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** I'm afraid not. The Committee has to be free to make a dispassionate appraisal of the situation, and an appeal from an individual applicant might lead to a precedent-making variation that would upset the whole apple cart.

**NUMBER 46:** I hate to inject such a mundane consideration, but the fact is

that I really need a house right away. The place we live in now is going to be torn down for a public housing project.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Our Committee long has advocated the use of vacant land for public housing sites.

**NUMBER 46:** My place still is going to be torn down, and for that matter, it should be.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Have you tried buying any place else?

**NUMBER 46:** That's what the last six real estate salesmen asked me.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** There are some other dandy open-occupancy developments around the country.

**NUMBER 46:** I got a good job here.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN** (impatiently): I can see that you just don't understand our position in this matter.

**NUMBER 46** (resignedly): Nor you, mine. Ah, well, life is too short to prolong a discussion that leadeth nowhere. (To himself:) Perhaps it is my fate to be a block buster.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN** (enthusiastically): If you do bust a block, let us know! Our Committee also sponsors an excellent block organization project. We'll move right in and discourage other white residents from selling to Negroes (in accordance with a current theory).

**NUMBER 46:** To prevent the formation of a ghetto?

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Right!

**NUMBER 46:** I think that this is where I came in. It'd be just my luck to pick out a house in a block that had already been busted and find that you folks had done such a good job of block organization that I couldn't buy it.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** That could happen, of course, but look at it this way: When your number finally comes up, that is, when some day you fit into the right quota, you will be assured that your neighborhood won't be deluged with Negroes.

**NUMBER 46:** But some of my best friends are Negroes.

**DEDICATED SALESMAN:** Well, really! How reactionary can you be? I can see now that you wouldn't be suitable for Integration Acres even if the Negro quota weren't filled.

**NUMBER 46** (humbled and exalted): When does the next helicopter leave?

CURTAIN

## A Catholic Program for Interracial Justice

America's so-called race problem is, at its roots, a moral problem. It presents to Catholics a challenge and an opportunity to translate doctrine into action. **YOU** can do just that by taking out a \$3 membership in the Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago.

CIC is an organization of laymen who are doing some very definite things to promote interracial understanding.

**EDUCATION:** Sponsors a program among 400 grade schools, 79 high schools, and 35 colleges in the Midwest. Program includes: conferences, study days, tours, workshops, contests, displays, distribution of literature and films, scholarships, information service, and publication of monthly newsletter.

**HOSPITALS:** Works to eliminate discrimination in hospital admission policies and to secure the appointment of qualified doctors to medical staffs regardless of race. Sponsors annual Hospital Conference and publishes proceedings.

**RESOLVING RACIAL CONFLICTS:** Investigates alleged acts of discrimination. Sponsors programs designed to prevent and stop open racial conflict situations on neighborhood or community levels.

**RESEARCH:** Sponsors original research projects, designed to provide the organization with facts. One study currently under way will show extent of integration among parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

**COMMUNION MASSES AND BREAKFASTS:** Membership Masses and Breakfasts are held periodically. Annual Communion Mass and Breakfast in the spring.

**CROWE AWARDS:** Thomas J. Crowe Interracial Justice Awards presented annually to individuals, groups, or organizations for outstanding contributions to interracial understanding.

**CONSULTATION:** With staff members on various aspects of race relations.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS:** Publication of monthly newsletter. Continuous information to religious and secular press on Council activities, including assistance with preparation of feature articles and news stories.

**LITERATURE AND FILMS:** Pamphlets, leaflets, books, reprints, and films are available for individual or group use.

**SPEAKERS BUREAU:** Well-informed speakers on interracial topics for meetings, breakfasts, etc.

**NEWCOMERS:** Programs designed to assist with urban adjustment of newcomers to Chicago metropolitan area, by the Negroes, Southern Whites, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or American Indians.

**Catholic Interracial Council of Chicago**

21 West Superior Street  
Chicago 10, Illinois

Phone: DElaware 7-7776



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Carl Rowan Finds Sorrow in the South

## A Penetrating Review of Young Journalist's Highly Personal, Often Bitter Report

GO SOUTH TO SORROW by Carl T. Rowan. Random House, New York, New York. 248 pages. \$3.50.

CARL T. ROWAN had reason to be interested in the South's reaction to the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling that school segregation is unconstitutional.

For one thing, his earlier articles on school segregation cases had won for him a Sigma Delta Chi citation as the nation's best general reporting of 1953 (one of many high honors earned by the 31-year-old Minneapolis Tribune writer).

For another, he is himself a Negro, born and raised in the South—aware that but for the grace of new federal racial policies in the service, a G.I. bill assuring his education, God-given intelligence and talent (and the "breaks" to develop them), the fortunes of northern employment on a liberal newspaper . . . but for all these, he, too, might be on the receiving end of the South's reaction to recent Supreme Court decisions.

### Filled with Bitterness

His return trip to the South confirms his fear that reaction has, indeed, set in and taken over. This book, his third, is filled with bitterness as he recounts the incidents—many of them familiar from recent headlines, others not so well known—that make him believe Southern race relations have worsened.

Mr. Rowan reviews the murders of Emmett Till, Lamar Smith, and the Rev. George W. Lee.

Gus Courts was more fortunate—he was only wounded after economic boycott failed to force him out of business or into submission to the White Citizens' Council. His crime? In his own words, "I was 66 years old, and what I wanted more than anything in the world was to be able to say I had voted." This wish, not an odd one for an American citizen, got him into the

hospital and into the files of "unfinished business" of the FBI.

In another more well known case, that of Autherine Lucy and her attempt to study at the University of Alabama, Mr. Rowan clears up a point that may have been obscured by the day-to-day publicity. He brings out that not until after one near-successful attempt at registration in 1952, four years before the case hit the front pages, did she seek the aid of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

(Though he points out that "for some strange reason Americans fall for the old 'Troublemaker' label and figure that something is wrong if a group of people deliberately plan a campaign to gain what the Constitution says belongs to them.")

### Describes Disgust in Africa

Red propaganda? What need for propagandists when news from America carries such stories to the African and Asian world!

"I sat in the upper lobby of the Ringway Hotel in Accra, Gold Coast, the day the trustees announced her permanent suspension," writes Mr. Rowan, who has traveled much in Africa and the Orient. "Africans and white men expressed bitter disgust as they huddled around a radio listening to the BBC account of the Tuscaloosa story."

Less known, even, are the white people, most of them Southerners, who are suffering for justice sake. Their stories, too, are given, from "Big Jim" Folsom, defeated in election because (in the opinion of the Citizens' Council) he didn't bear down hard enough on Miss Lucy, and President Oliver Carmichael of the University of Alabama, tormented by phone calls and charges of being a "nigger lover" for trying to stay on an even academic keel.

Dr. Chester Travelstead fired from the University of South Carolina for daring to say that the Supreme Court should be obeyed and that racial integration was a major educational problem; Dr. Guy Wells, deprived of his title (and pre-requisites) as president emeritus of Georgia State College for Women. . . . Dr. Deborah Coggins, Florida health officer, fired. . . . Mrs. Flo Way, teacher, asked to resign. . . . Hazel Brannon Smith, editor, sued. . . .

Even the big corporations are being taken on by white supremacists, Mr. Rowan brings out. Boycotts and other forms of pressure have been leveled against Philco, Falstaff Brewing, Ford, and Phillip Morris, for employment policies, mainly, even if only in TV programs which they sponsor.

### Some Bright Spots

There are, of course, bright spots in the book, and the account of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott is one of them. Some of the comments reported are worth repeating:

By an Alabama white woman: "It is interesting to read editorials on the legality of this boycott. They make me think of that famous one that turned America from a tea- to a coffee-drinking nation. Come to think of it, one might say that this nation was founded upon a boycott."

A Negro minister and an older woman: "Sister, aren't you getting tired?" "My soul has been tired for a long time. Now my feet are tired and my soul is resting."

Rowan himself: "In all the 18 years I had lived in the South, in my three extended trips back since World War II, I had never seen such spirit among a group of Negroes."

And the Rev. Luther King: "We are not returning to the buses to abuse anyone, or to gloat over any so-called victory over the white people of Montgomery. We shall go back in a spirit of love and humility."

The book is an emotional, highly personal document. From this arise its faults and values. It seems hastily (though well) written, sketchy, some-



Carl T. Rowan

times intemperate. But it is readable, as befits a book which should be in the hands of the average man, who is not necessarily a student in sociology or constitutional law, nor doesn't feel that his concern is "race relations" or "social action" as such.

### Blanket Indictment

One wonders, though, about such a blanket indictment as this statement: "I think the record will show that we have invited crisis after crisis by our cowardliness, by falling victim to a national sickness—for which the germ-carriers are both Democrats and Republicans—what I can describe only as gutlessness in the name of 'moderation.'"

He may have a good point, but this is a problem which must be fought out through, as well as in, the name of the democratic process.

## Two Children's Books on Race

SUSAN'S SECRET by Hildreth Wriston, Ariel Books of Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., New York 3, New York. 128 pages. \$2.75.

FUN FOR CHRIS by Blossom E. Randall, Albert Whitman & Company, Chicago, Illinois. Unpaged. \$1.75.

SUSAN'S SECRET is the story, told for children from 9 to 13, of a little girl of 100 years ago, whose family's Vermont farm is a station of the Underground Railroad.

At the beginning of the book Susan isn't considered old enough to share responsibility for the well-being of fugitive slaves, but events occur which force her not only into the sharing of the family secret, but into an exciting wagon ride by night, taking a Negro family to the next station of the "Railroad."

It is a pity that the author mars her story by having Susan lie to her little sister with the explanation: "She was sure this was one of the times when you just had to tell a lie." This is in itself a most questionable statement, but in the circumstances of the book the lie wasn't necessary by any standards. I myself thought of at least three ways out of Susan's dilemma without injuring truth!

This criticism made, Susan's Secret is a gay, fast-paced little book, well adapted to its purpose of explaining

Too, he dismisses with short words the tortured efforts of William Faulkner, Southern novelist, to arrive at an honest, albeit economic, explanation for race troubles, with, "This is too logical an explanation for a system and deeds that are, for the most part, completely illogical."

Yet Mr. Rowan himself, with commendable charity and compassion, has himself earlier written:

"Here are men and women who are aware daily that no child in South Carolina gets the kind of schooling given to youngsters in Michigan, who feel that everyone in Alabama is poorer than everyone in Pennsylvania; and these things keep alive for the white man the memory of a time when the South lay prostrate, the casualty of war. These are the things that nurture insecurity, that strengthen an inferiority complex, that enable men to rationalize injustice, the illogical into the logical, the ungodly into the godly."

### Good Work Is Done

Finally, good solid work is being done daily in racial betterment, as Friendship House people know and as this reviewer has been privileged to glimpse—work by Catholics and Quakers, Jews and Unitarians, Protestants, and civic-minded souls, the federal government and individuals, from Washington on south.

Their omission in this book may be explained by the author's concentration on Mississippi and Alabama; but it seems a shame that the Catholic Church is only mentioned indirectly, and in two places—the admission of four Negroes to a Jacksonville, North Carolina, Knights of Columbus council, and a reference to Georgetown's Professor Tansil and his shocking race theories.

Except for the part played by ministers in the Montgomery bus boycott, Protestants don't fare much better.

But taken as presented, as a highly personal document by an articulate and anguished writer, it is a good review of recent Southern race history, of—one hopes—the death throes of an atypical epoch.

—Kathleen Carmody

Mrs. Carmody has just left the CATHOLIC STANDARD, newspaper of the Washington, D.C., archdiocese, to be a full-time housewife. She has appeared frequently in COMMUNITY.

## Book Review

the Underground Railroad to children. Fun for Chris is designed for children from about five to eight. It presents the problem of prejudice in terms of little boys playing in a backyard. One objects to a Negro playmate, but another insists the Negro is his best friend.

### All Should Be Friends

An understanding mother explains to everyone's satisfaction why, although some children are dark and some are light, all should be friends.

Susan's Secret, of course, deals with a matter of history, of which it's good for children to be aware; but one wonders about books such as Fun for Chris, of which there are many.

They are rather like taking a child to the dentist for cavities which could have been prevented. Young children are not naturally prejudiced, and it's a crying shame that at five or six years old they should already need books to unprejudice them. But undeniably they do.

Let us hope that the next generation will grow up, not only with unsegregated schools, but unsegregated minds.

—Pat McGowan

Mrs. McGowan formerly was on the staff of Sheed and Ward publishers in New York City. She and her husband and one-year-old daughter Chrissie live in Fall River, Massachusetts.

## A BOOK ABOUT TODAY'S LAYMAN

—In the Church  
—in the community

THE MODERN APOSTLE  
Louis J. Putz, C.S.C. \$2.95



The role of the layman in the modern world, by a priest who knows and understands the problems facing the laity.

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 1  
at all bookstores  
FIDES PUBLISHERS Chicago 19



# Mission to Martinique

John Russell, USIA Chief, Uses Personal Resources To Help Poor in "Land of Contradictions"

JOHN RUSSELL's first glimpse of Martinique in the summer of 1956 was accompanied by the same throbbing excitement experienced by most visitors to this tiny, colorful island in the West Indies.

It wasn't long before Mr. Russell, chief of the United States Information Agency, discovered that underneath this aura of beauty lay smoldering problems—social, economic, political—as varied and complex as the tangle of vegetation that cloaks the island.

## Land of Contradictions

He found the inhabitants a maze of contradictions. Although regarded as about 97 per cent colored, there is scarcely a Negro of pure, unmixed ancestry—as evidenced by the amazing array of skin tones and facial characteristics.

Further, in a population that is 100 per cent Catholic one witnesses the dizzying paradox of a man reverently hearing Mass on Sunday and enthusiastically cheering at a Communist rally on Monday.

On top of this there is a rather hazy social structure of three more or less distinct groups—the white sugar plant-

er class, the colored intellectual class, the great mass of black cane cutters.

One indisputable fact emerges from this web of inconsistency: the great majority of the people live in dire poverty and benefit very little from the sugar and rum economy of their island.

## Explains U.S. Role

Mr. Russell's task as head of USIA in Martinique is explaining United States foreign policy. He also spreads information showing that the United States furthers world peace through the United Nations, economic assistance to foreign countries, and world wide cultural contributions. This he has done with a brilliance and energy that has won him the respect and backing of the diverse elements in Martinique.

But far more than this, his intense interest in the poor and his work in their behalf, stemming from a keen awareness of their problems and a long-standing concern for their welfare, has done much to weaken Communist control of Fort de France.

An honor graduate of Howard University and holding a Master's degree from American University, he also su-

Mr. and Mrs. John Russell with their daughter Arsela.



pervises the information program in French Guiana and on the neighboring island of Guadeloupe. Although not a Catholic himself, his closest collaboration is with the Catholic clergy, and his work has received the enthusiastic support of the Bishop of Martinique.

## Helps Start Youth Center

Mr. Russell's proudest achievement and the one that gives him the greatest personal satisfaction is the St. Justin Youth Center of which he is honorary president. He likes to recall how it all started from his first meeting with Father Van Maastricht, the saintly Dutch priest who has spent his health in his labor for souls.

Father Van Maastricht has a simplicity so utterly free of guile as to be completely disarming. Unhesitatingly he told Mr. Russell:

"You can give me 10,000 francs for the poor people of my parish."

10,000 francs! Only about \$30 in American money but a princely sum to the missionary.

This was the beginning of a warm friendship and one with far-reaching results, for out of it mushroomed the St. Justin Youth Center. Mr. Russell dug deeply into his own personal resources to stock the center with chairs, tables, books, English teaching materials, ping-pong and badminton sets, and a variety of other sport equipment. Today the center is a place bursting with healthy revelry in a slum area of few diversions.

## USIA Library Center

The USIA Franco-American Library in downtown Fort de France is fast becoming a social, intellectual, and recreational center for increasingly large numbers of young people and adults. With a wide selection of books, magazines, pamphlets, and recordings the library has been described by the Superintendent of Schools as a model of its kind.

On an island whose recreational facilities are sharply limited, programs at the library do much to fill in this gap. Scarcely an evening goes by that there isn't something going on there: English classes, educational films, play reading

groups, recorded symphonic and operatic concerts.

Playing a major role in the success of her husband's mission is Mrs. Russell, who grew up in Huntsville, Alabama, where her father was president of Oakwood College. After graduating from Howard University, Mrs. Russell taught biology at Cardozo High School in the nation's capital for several years.

In Martinique, where household help is plentiful and inexpensive, Hortense Russell is that rare individual, a lady who prefers to do her own cooking and keeps the care and upbringing of their two-year old daughter Arsela firmly in her own hands.

Versatility has become her stock-in-trade. She moves easily from filling in as English teacher at the library or playing a game of ping-pong with a slum child at the youth center to being hostess to visiting celebrities.

(A typical event was a recent phone call from her husband, Noel Coward, the British playwright, had just dropped into the library—would it be all right to bring him home for lunch?)

## Break with Communists

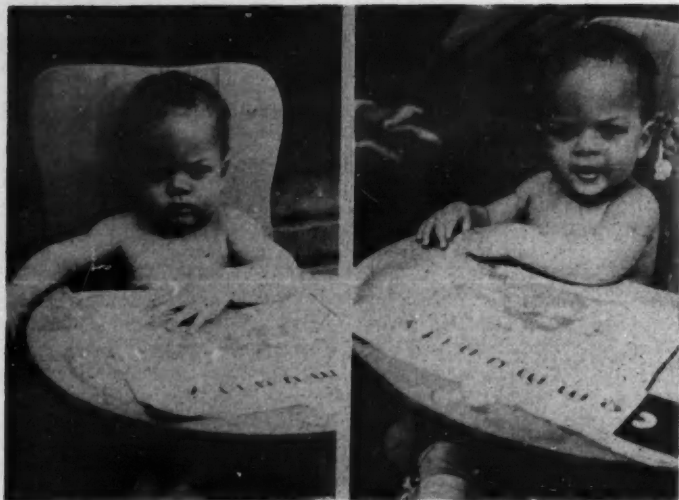
Last autumn the work of the United States Information Agency was given a push from a most unexpected source. Aime Cesaire, deputy from Martinique and mayor of the capital city of Fort de France, broke from the French Communist Party with an explosion that rocked the red world.

What his break from the party means for the future of Communism in Martinique is still a matter of conjecture. However, the move away from Moscow has been made.

In the meantime John Russell demonstrates another way of life, one whose history has often been stormy and spotted here and there with mistakes and injustices, but one that is based on the principle that man's human dignity is of infinite worth and his freedom as precious as his life's blood.

—Larry Kickham

Larry recently returned from four months in Martinique. He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts.



"Call this a paper?"

"Sa-a-ay—pretty good!"

Newest recruit to the ranks of **COMMUNITY** fans is Master Sean Parks of Chicago. "Get your friends to try reading **COMMUNITY**," he says. "They'll be convinced, too—and reaching for the coupons below. (If you don't want them cutting your copy, have them use a sheet of plain paper. Just include the information on the coupon, please.)"

Sean may have been influenced to favor **COMMUNITY**. His mother Julia Pyles Parks was a Friendship House staff worker and his father Vince Parks an FH volunteer. But WE think that had nothing to do with his switch. 'Twas simply the obvious excellence of **COMMUNITY** that won him over! Why don't you **SUBSCRIBE FOR A FRIEND?**

**COMMUNITY—Friendship House's Monthly Paper**

Rate: \$1 a year • \$2 two years • \$1.25 a year foreign

## COMMUNITY

4233 South Indiana Avenue  
Chicago 15, Illinois

- ☐ New  
☐ Renew

Send to:

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

Zone .....

State .....

(O)

☐ Gift—send notification

Your Name .....

## COMMUNITY

4233 South Indiana Avenue  
Chicago 15, Illinois

- ☐ New  
☐ Renew

Send to:

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

Zone .....

State .....

(O)

☐ Gift—send notification

Your Name .....

# WANTED

Men and women, Negro and white,  
**STAFF WORKERS** for Friendship House

- to challenge the ideas and attitudes that lead to racial injustice
- to promote peace and unity by applying the Church's teaching to social institutions

## QUALIFICATIONS DESIRED:

Understanding of racial problems.

Experience in race relations work helpful.

Willingness to sacrifice salary—temporarily workers will receive only board-and-room allowance.

Either administrative and fund-raising experience, skill in organizing groups and training people, or writing and editorial talent.

Openings in East and Midwest.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, write or call

## FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

4233 South Indiana Avenue, Chicago 15, Illinois  
Phone: KEnwood 6-9039